

ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK HELD THIS MONTH

Canadian doctors performed 1487 organ transplants last year, a slight increase from 1993, the Canadian Coalition on Organ Donor Awareness (CCODA) reported as it prepared to mark Organ Donor Awareness Week from Apr. 23–30. The transplanted organs came from 412 donors, representing only 14 donors per million residents.

Although the rate of organ donation has remained relatively stable, increasing from 47.7 transplants per million people in 1991 to 50.7 per million last year, CCODA officials are optimistic about an Ontario initiative. Each of the province's 11 million residents will receive a new health card during the next 5 years that will not only ask for consent for organ donation but also retain signed consents on a database. This will ease the burden on families and health care professionals, say CCODA officials, while providing demographic and geographic data for transplant programs. If the Ontario initiative is successful, other provinces may follow suit, a CCODA spokesperson said.

RURAL PHYSICIANS MEET IN MONTREAL

The Society of Rural Physicians holds its second annual meeting in Montreal Apr. 19 in conjunction with the third annual course on rural and remote-area medicine sponsored by McGill University, which is being held Apr.

20 and 21. This year's conference will focus on actions rural physicians can take to improve working conditions and "mend some damage" that these conditions cause. Stress, burnout, the need for time off and the effects of regionalization will be discussed. Information about the society is available from PO Box 148, Mount Forest, ON N0G 2L0.

NOW THAT'S A BED SHORTAGE!

The *London Times* reports that a patient who went to the bathroom returned to find her hospital bed had been taken away and assigned to another patient. It took nearly 2 hours for Pamela Singh, a 51-year-old Sheffield teacher who had just had surgery for varicose veins, to receive a replacement bed at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital. An internal inquiry was launched to examine the incident, which the *Times* said left the patient "weeping in despair."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CJP

The *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* (CJP) has entered its 40th year of continuous publication. Originally published as the *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*, its mission is to reflect Canadian psychiatry in a way that provides information, guidance and relevance to readers around the world. The current editor-in-chief is Dr. Edward Kingstone.

NOVOPHARM ACQUIRES DRUG FACILITY

Novopharm Ltd. of Toronto, Canada's leading manufacturer of generic drugs, was to take over the Montreal production facility of Rhône-Poulenc Rorer (RPR) Canada by Mar. 31. Under the agreement, Novopharm acquires production and office facilities in Montreal, and will lease office space back to RPR, which will continue its own research and development projects, sales, marketing and administration. Novopharm, which will manufacture its own generic drugs at the plant, will continue to make products currently produced there for at least the next 5 years.

LOCUM-TENENS JOBS IN AUSTRALIA

The United States is not the only country looking for Canadian-trained physicians. The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians recently distributed a copy of a letter from a recruiter who was looking for Canadians to fill locum-tenens positions in underserved parts of Australia. Assignments lasting 6 to 24 months were available in radiology, anesthesia, obstetrics-gynecology, general practice, psychiatry, ophthalmology, emergency medicine and orthopedics. Annual compensation, about \$120 000 for specialists and \$79 000 for primary care physicians, "can increase substantially as there are ample provisions for overtime and weekend call," the letter said.

PMAC DISTRIBUTES 600 000 KITS

More than 600 000 information kits and medication records were shipped to consumers and health care professionals by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada (PMAC) last year during a public-education campaign designed to promote the responsible use of medicine. The response to television ads was overwhelming, the PMAC said in a news release. It reported that it had to suspend advertising last fall to focus on reprinting kits and fulfilling bulk orders.

About 12% of the calls to a toll-free line were from health care professionals, and 60% of those were from physicians who reported that the kit was useful in patient counselling and had led to perceived changes in patient attitudes or behaviour. A PMAC spokesperson said that physicians ordered an average of more than 50 kits and 90 medication records for patient use. The campaign will continue during 1995; doctors who wish to order kits or receive more information can call 800 363-0203.

SAVINGS POSSIBLE IN DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

Faced with finding cost savings to mitigate a projected fee-for-service overexpenditure of \$4.4 million in 1994-95, Manitoba physicians have been reminded to consider whether a diagnostic test is medically necessary and who should pay for it. In the January edition of the newsletter *Inter-Com*, Manitoba Medical Association (MMA) president Dr. Neil Dönnen said "when you're living under a capped budget, any time tests are used unnecessarily or inappropriately, it's at the expense of something else. Neither the patient nor ordering physician benefits, while

valuable tax dollars that contribute to our medical services budget are wasted."

Inter-Com said that if 10% of services listed in a table of the 10 most expensive radiology and pathology services could be eliminated, \$1.96 million could be saved, or almost \$1000 per Manitoba physician. "That saving would have gone a long way toward reducing the current \$4.4-million overexpenditure," *Inter-Com* said.

PROGRAM GIVES UNEMPLOYED SCIENCE GRADS JOB EXPERIENCE

Manitoba science and technology graduates who are having a hard time entering a difficult job market are receiving a boost from a 40-week pilot program funded by the federal government. The Jobs Initiative Program, which places unemployed graduates in jobs at medical research laboratories at the University of Manitoba, aims to help participants find full-time work in their field. *University Affairs*, published by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, says organizers expect at least 75% of participants to land jobs by the time the \$575 000 program is completed. It is open to people who would otherwise be collecting unemployment insurance. Participants spend 90% of their time in a laboratory, working directly under the supervision of a research scientist.

PROCEDURES CONCERNING SEXUAL-ABUSE COMPLAINTS REVIEWED

Ontario's Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC) is assessing the effectiveness of complaints and disciplinary procedures relating to the sexual abuse of pa-

tients. The assessment will involve each of the 21 colleges governed by the legislation, including the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. The review is being undertaken under the terms of the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, which provided a new legal framework for the self-regulation of health care professionals.

Beginning in September, researchers will assess each college's reporting of sexual abuse, actions taken to protect victims and the general public from sexually abusive professionals, rehabilitation of abusers, reimbursement of the victim's expenses and prevention of abuse. The analysis is expected to take 3 years and a report is expected in 1999. The HPRAC is currently reviewing an evaluation procedure recommended by an independent consultant. Copies of that report are available by calling 416 326-1550.

NEW STETHOSCOPE FULLY ELECTRONIC

A new fully electronic stethoscope that was developed in coordination with the Clinical Research Institute of Montreal is to be manufactured and distributed in Canada and the United States. The new stethoscope, which is battery operated and will retail for about \$400, incorporates recent advances in miniaturization and features low energy consumption.

An advanced version of the electronic stethoscope features a computer interface and can record and reproduce sound, a feature that may appeal to teaching facilities. The technologies of Montreal invested about \$2.5 million in the development and manufacture of the "Stethos" stethoscope, which will be distributed by the Baxter Corporation of Mississauga, Ont.